DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 286 554 JC 870 425

TITLE	Student Assessment: Literacy. ERIC Digest.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges, Los Angeles, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Aug 84
CONTRACT	400-83-0030
NOTE	3p.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; Educational Testing; Grammar; *Knowledge Level; Language Skills; *Literacy; Punctuation; *Reading Comprehension; Two Year Colleges; *Two Year College Students; *Writing Skills
IDENTIFIERS	*Center for the Study of Community Colleges CA; ERIC Digests; *General Academic Assessment

ABSTRACT

In an effort to assess community college students' knowledge of the liberal arts, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges developed and field-tested a student survey and General Academic Assessment (GAA) instrument. The GAA was completed by a sample of 8,024 students at four large, urban community college districts. The scores were cross tabulated by selected student characteristic variables (e.g., age, ethnicity, native language, and reason for attending college) and selected educational background variables (e.g., the number of college units already completed by the student, and the number of English courses the student had taken prior to the GAA test). On the literacy section of the GAA, which assessed student ability in English grammar, punctuation, and reading ability, older students scored slightly higher than younger students. Not surpisingly, native language seemed an important factor in a student's ability to use English. Students attending college to satisfy personal interest scored higher on the literacy section than those intending to transfer or receiving occupational training. There appeared to be a positive correlation between the number of semester hours completed and scores on the literacy section of the GAA. A positive correlation was revealed between the number of English courses taken and the students' GAA literacy scores. (EJV)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

UCLA

ERIC® CLEARINGHOUSE FOR JUNIOR COLLEGES

The Clearinghouse operates under NIE Contract No. 400-83-0030. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of NIE and no official endorsement by NIE should be inferred.

ERIC DIGEST

August 1984

ED286554

STUDENT ASSESSMENT - LITERACY

In an effort to assess community college students' knowledge of the liberal arts, the Center for the Study of Community Colleges developed and field-tested a student survey and general academic assessment. This General Academic Assessment (GAA) has representative numbers of items in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, mathematics, and English usage. In addition, it contains such background items about the students as age, the number of college credits earned, educational and occupational aspirations, self-assessment of their skills, and the number of liberal-arts courses taken.

During 1983 and 1984, a sample of 8,824 students at four large urban community college districts (Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami-Dade, and St. Louis) completed the GAA instrument. The sample was obtained by taking every twentieth eligible class section in each of the districts' schedule of classes. Only sections with academic transfer-credits were eligible; students taking remedial classes, vocational-technical classes, adult education, or community services courses exclusively were not included.

This ERIC digest examines how well the students did on the literacy portion of the GAA. The nature of the literacy test items is first discussed, followed by a series of tables that detail scores by ethnicity, age, and educational background.

Test items in the literacy section of the GAA assess student ability in English grammar, punctuation and reading comprehension. An example is provided below:

> Grammar. Each sentence below may contain an error in grammar (wrong form of verb, noun, pronoun, adjective, adverb). A few sentences are correct as they stand. Circle the letter indicating the error, if any. If there is no error in the sentence, circle the letter E on the answer sheet.
>
> 1. As she entered the bus the woman said, "There's no seats in
> A B C
> the back; let's stand here by the door." (No error)
> D E
>
> 2. The only weakness that lowers the grades on my English
> A B C
> themes are the errors in spelling. (No error)
> D E

JC 870435

Items were provided by the City Colleges of Chicago. Selection was made by panels of staff members from community colleges in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Miami, Phoenix and St. Louis. A total of 60 items in English usage was used on the five forms of the GAA.

Scores on the literacy section were aggregated and converted to ten-point scale scores.

In the following tables, the GAA scores are cross tabulated by selected Student Characteristic variables and selected Educational background variables. Student characteristics encompass age, ethnicity, native language, and reason for attending college; Educational background variables include the number of college units already completed by the student, and the number of English courses that the student has taken prior to the GAA test. Each table shows, in rank order, the mean literacy score on a scale of 1 to 10.

I. GAA Scores Cross Tabulated by Student Characteristics

A. Mean Scores by Student Age

In general, older students scored higher than younger students. However, the difference between high and low scores is less than one point.

Age	Mean	Number
Over 50	5.71	176
41 - 50	5.30	386
31 - 40	5.06	896
20 or less	4.99	3,215
21 - 30	4.78	3,245
Entire Population	4.94	7,838

B. Mean Scores by Whether or not English is the Native Language

Not surprisingly, native language seems an important factor in a student's ability to use English. However, when examined by ethnic group, native and non-native English speaking Hispanics not only show the smallest differential, but also scored second highest in each instance.

Ethnic Group	Mean/Yes	N	Mean/No	N	Differential
All	5.19	6,095	4.10	1,877	1.09
Asian	4.48	208	3.85	549	.63
Black	4.15	1,894	3.32	111	.83
Hispanic	4.77	599	4.35	817	.42
White	5.82	3,027	4.43	265	1.59
Other	4.77	223	3.59	100	.98

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

C. Mean Scores by Reason for Attending College

Students attend community colleges for a variety of reasons. Those attending to satisfy a personal interest scored higher on the literacy section than those intending to transfer or receiving occupational training.

Reason for Attending	Mean	Number
Personal Interest	5.43	568
Transfer	4.98	4,453
Advance in Occupation	4.82	702
Enter an Occupation	4.72	2,139
Entire Population	4.93	7,862

Students planning a career in the applied arts scored higher than any other career aspirations with a score of 5.29.

D. Mean Scores by Self-Assessment of Editing Skills

Students taking the GAA were asked to rate their own ability to edit written material as compared to other students at their college. Those who rated themselves highly also scored high on the literacy section of the GAA.

Rating	Mean	Number
Excellent	6.28	1,050
Good	5.08	2,992
Fair	4.58	3,031
Poor	4.16	806
Entire Population	4.95	7,879

II. GAA Scores Cross Tabulated by Educational Background

A. Mean Scores by Number of Completed College Units

There appears to be a positive correlation between the number of semester hours completed and scores on the literacy section of the GAA.

Number of Units Completed	Mean	Number
60 or more	5.55	1,265
45 - 59	4.96	1,055
30 - 44	4.90	1,396
15 - 29	4.83	1,635
0 - 14	4.73	2,213

When compared by ethnic group, the rate of gain for Asian students was among the highest.

Ethnic Group	Mean	N	Mean	N	Differential
	0-14 Units		60 or more units		
Asian	3.69	166	4.63	138	.94
Black	3.98	550	4.59	278	.61
Hispanic	4.56	429	4.56	197	0
White	5.52	936	6.68	567	1.16
Other	4.19	79	5.06	52	.87

B. Mean Scores by Number of English Courses Taken

A positive correlation is revealed between the number of English courses taken and the students' GAA literacy scores.

No. of English Courses	Mean	Number
Three or more	5.01	1,373
Two courses	5.00	2,159
One Course	4.97	2,033
None	4.87	1,974
Entire Population	4.96	7,539

The GAA is meant to assess students' knowledge of the liberal arts in community colleges. The literacy section, as well as the others, was designed specifically to assess the learning of cohorts of students, not individual students. The data from the GAA will be used as a tool to aid in program planning, curricular modifications, and to gauge institutional outcomes. More information about the GAA may be obtained from:

Center for the Study of Community Colleges
Research Director: Florence B. Brawer
1047 Gayley Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Riley, Michelle. The Community College General Academic Assessment: Los Angeles District, 1983. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1984.
ED number not yet assigned.

Riley, Michelle. The Community College General Academic Assessment: Miami-Dade Community College District, 1983. Los Angeles: Center for the Study of Community Colleges, 1984.
ED number not yet assigned.

ERIC Digests examining other sections of the GAA are available from the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges; 8118 Math Sciences Building; UCLA; Los Angeles, California 90024.

ERIC Clearinghouse for
Junior Colleges
NOV 06 1987